



# Old Guard Honors the Fallen

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**M**ore than 400,000 active-duty service members, veterans and their families are buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Whether they are maintaining a 24-hour vigil at the Tomb of the Unknowns or firing three rifle volleys as part of the Firing Party, 3rd Infantry Regiment Soldiers conduct ceremonies and memorial affairs to honor America's fallen at the cemetery.

Up to 30 funerals take place daily at the nation's most revered cemetery and

the Army does about half of those, said Sgt. 1st Class Adony A. Batista, platoon sergeant for the Firing Party of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard).

By the end of a two- or three-year tour in the Army's oldest active-duty infantry regiment headquartered at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall at Arlington County, Virginia, a Soldier will have performed 100 or more funerals for service members, according to the Old Guard.

Military funerals with standard honors include a Casket Platoon, the Firing Party and a bugler, as well as a caisson for service members who have reached the top NCO grade of E-9. In addition to standard honors, full honors military funerals include an Escort Platoon and a military band.

Soldiers in the Old Guard must pass the demanding Regimental Orientation Program, a three-week course designed to teach new arrivals the subtle distinctions of the uniforms of the Old Guard, rifle movements and marching that is unique to the elite precision unit.

Maintaining ceremonial composure is critical to the unit's Soldiers, especially in front of the families who serve as inspiration.

"We are that last Soldier some of these families see, whether it be here, rendering final honors for service members or at the Tomb of the Unknowns, [so we have to be on point]," Batista said. ■

















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